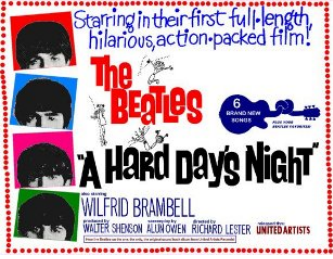


# A Hard Day's Night (film)

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Cinema poster	
<b>Directed by</b>	Richard Lester
<b>Produced by</b>	Walter Shenson
<b>Written by</b>	Alun Owen
<b>Starring</b>	The Beatles
<b>Music by</b>	The Beatles George Martin
<b>Cinematography</b>	Gilbert Taylor
<b>Editing by</b>	John Jympson
<b>Distributed by</b>	United Artists (1964) Universal Pictures (1982) Miramax Films (2000)
<b>Release date(s)</b>	6 July 1964 ( <i>UK</i> ) 11 August 1964 ( <i>US</i> )
<b>Running time</b>	87 minutes
<b>Country</b>	United Kingdom
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Budget</b>	~£200,000 (~\$500,000)
<b>Gross revenue</b>	~£2,500,000 (~\$6,165,000)

*A Hard Day's Night* is a 1964 British black and white comedy film directed by Richard Lester and starring The Beatles—John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr—during the height of Beatlemania. It was written by Alun Owen and originally released by United Artists. The film was made in the style of a mockumentary, describing a couple of days in the lives of the group.

It was successful both financially and critically; it was rated by *Time* magazine as one of the all-time great 100 films.[1] British critic Leslie Halliwell described it as a "comic fantasia with music; an enormous commercial success with the director trying every cinematic gag in the book" and awarded it a full four stars.[2] The film is credited with having influenced 1960s spy films, The Monkees' television show and pop music videos.

## Screenplay

The screenplay was written by Alun Owen, who was chosen because The Beatles were familiar with his play *No Trams to Lime Street*, and he had shown an aptitude for Liverpudlian dialogue. McCartney commented, "Alun hung around with us and was careful to try and put words in our mouths that he might've heard us speak, so I thought he did a very good script."<sup>[3]</sup> Owen spent several days with the group, who told him their lives were like "a train and a room and a car and a room and a room and a room"; the character of Paul's grandfather refers to this in the dialogue.<sup>[4]</sup> Owen wrote the script from the viewpoint that The Beatles had become prisoners of their own fame, their schedule of performances and studio work having become punishing.

## Plot

Halliwell encapsulates the plot as "Harassed by their manager and Paul's grandpa, The Beatles embark from Liverpool by train for a London TV show."<sup>[2]</sup> Having escaped a horde of fans, once aboard the train and trying to relax, various interruptions begin to test their patience, prompting George to go to the goods van for some peace and quiet.

On arrival in London, The Beatles are driven to a hotel where they feel trapped. After a night out during which Paul's grandfather causes minor trouble at a casino, the group is taken to the theatre where their performance is to be filmed. The preparations are lengthy so Ringo decides to spend some time alone reading a book. Paul's grandfather, a "villain, a real mixer," convinces him that he should be outside experiencing life instead of reading books, so Ringo goes off by himself. He tries to have a quiet drink in a pub, walks alongside a canal and at one point rides a bicycle along a railway station platform.<sup>[5]</sup> Meanwhile, the rest of the band frantically (and unsuccessfully) attempts to find Ringo. Finally, however, he returns, after being arrested by the police along with Paul's grandfather, and the concert goes ahead as planned.<sup>[3]</sup>

The Beatles comment cheekily on their own fame: for instance, at one point a fan recognises John Lennon (even though neither the fan nor he actually mention Lennon's name); he demurs, saying his face is not quite right, with the fan eventually agreeing.<sup>[4]</sup> When Ringo is asked if he's a Mod or a Rocker, he replies "Uh, no, I'm a mocker".<sup>[6]</sup> The frequent reference to McCartney's grandfather as a "clean old man" contrasts with the *Steptoe and Son* stock description of Wilfrid Brambell's character, Albert Steptoe, as a "dirty old man".<sup>[7]</sup>

## Production

The film was shot for United Artists using a *cinéma vérité* style in black-and-white and produced over a period of sixteen weeks. It had a low budget for its time of £200,000 (\$500,000) and filming was finished in under seven weeks.<sup>[8]</sup> Unlike most productions, it was filmed in near sequential order, as stated by Lennon in 1964.<sup>[9]</sup> Filming began at Paddington Station on 2 March 1964, The Beatles having only joined the actors' union, Equity, that morning.<sup>[10]</sup> The first week of filming was on a train travelling between London and Minehead.<sup>[11]</sup> On 10 March, scenes with Ringo were shot at the Turk's Head pub in Twickenham, and over the following week various interior scenes were filmed at Twickenham Studios. From 23 to 30 March, filming moved to the Scala Theatre,<sup>[12]</sup> and on 31 March, concert footage was shot there, although the group mimed to backing tracks.<sup>[10]</sup> The "Can't Buy Me Love" segment, which featured creative camera work and the band running and jumping around in a field was shot on 23 April 1964 at Thornbury Playing Fields, Isleworth, Middlesex.<sup>[10]</sup> The final scene was filmed the following day in West Ealing, London, where Ringo obligingly drops his coat over puddles for a lady to step on, only to discover that the final puddle is actually a large hole in the road.<sup>[13]</sup>

Before *A Hard Day's Night* was released in America, a United Artists executive asked Lester to dub the voices of the group with mid-Atlantic accents. McCartney angrily replied, "Look, if we can understand a fuckin' cowboy talking Texan, they can understand us talking Liverpool."<sup>[14]</sup> Lester subsequently directed The Beatles' 1965 film, *Help!* and later several popular films, including *The Three Musketeers*, its sequel *The Four Musketeers*, and *Superman III*.

## Cast

Irish actor Wilfrid Brambell, who played Paul McCartney's fictional grandfather John McCartney, was already well-known to British audiences as co-star of the British sitcom *Steptoe and Son*. The recurring joke that he was so *clean* is because in the sitcom he was always referred to as a *dirty old man*. Norman Rossington played The Beatles' manager and John Junkin was "Shake", their road manager. Brian Epstein, their real manager, had an uncredited bit part.<sup>[15]</sup>

The supporting cast included Richard Vernon as the 'city gent' on the train, Lionel Blair as a featured dancer and Victor Spinetti as the television director. Cameos included David Langton, John Bluthal as a car thief and an uncredited Derek Nimmo as magician Leslie Jackson. David Janson played the small boy met by Ringo on his "walkabout". Rooney Massara, who went on to compete in the 1972 Munich Olympics, was the sculler in the river in the "walkabout" scene by the river at Kew (uncredited).

Mal Evans, one of the Beatles' road managers, also appears briefly in the film—moving an upright bass through a tight hallway as Lennon talks with the woman who mistakes him for someone else.

George Harrison met his wife-to-be, Patricia Boyd, on the set when she made a brief (uncredited) appearance as one of the schoolgirls on the train. His initial overtures to her were spurned because she had a boyfriend at the time but he persisted and they were married within 18 months.<sup>[16]</sup> The girl with Boyd in the dining car scene is Prudence Bury.<sup>[17]</sup> Phil Collins appeared, uncredited, as a boy in the concert audience.<sup>[18]</sup>



Harrison and Patricia Boyd on set

## Reception

The film premiered at The Pavilion Theatre in London on 6 July 1964—the eve of Ringo Starr's 24th birthday—and the soundtrack was released four days later.<sup>[19]</sup> Reviews of the film were mostly positive; one oft-quoted assessment was provided by *Village Voice*, which labelled *A Hard Day's Night* "the *Citizen Kane* of jukebox musicals."<sup>[20]</sup> *Time* magazine called the film "One of the smoothest, freshest, funniest films ever made for purposes of exploitation."<sup>[21]</sup> Film critic Roger Ebert described the film as "one of the great life-affirming landmarks of the movies".<sup>[22]</sup> In 2004, *Total Film* magazine named *A Hard Day's Night* the 42nd greatest British film of all time. In 2005, Time.com named it one of the 100 best films of the last 80 years.<sup>[1]</sup> Leslie Halliwell gave the film his highest rating, four stars, the only British film of 1964 to achieve that accolade.<sup>[2]</sup> It has a 100% rating on Rotten Tomatoes based on 71 sources.<sup>[23]</sup> It is also #1 on both Rotten Tomatoes' lists of the Top Ten Certified Fresh Musicals<sup>[24]</sup> and the Best Reviewed Movies of All Time.<sup>[25]</sup>

*New York Times* film critic Bosley Crowther noted the film was a subtle satire on the image of rock and roll music (and The Beatles in particular) as a source of youth rebellion and defiance of authority. The Beatles are portrayed as likeable young lads who are constantly amazed at the attention they receive and who want nothing more than a little peace and quiet; however, they have to deal with screaming crowds, journalists who ask nonsensical questions, and authority figures who constantly look down upon them.<sup>[26]</sup> In fact their biggest problem is McCartney's elderly, but "clean" grandfather, played by Wilfrid Brambell.<sup>[27]</sup>

*A Hard Day's Night* was nominated for two Academy Awards; for Best Screenplay (Alun Owen), and Best Score (Adaptation) (George Martin).

## Influence

British critic Leslie Halliwell states the film's influence as "... it led directly to all the kaleidoscopic swinging London spy thrillers and comedies of the later sixties..."<sup>[2]</sup> In particular, the visuals and storyline are credited with inspiring The Monkees' television series.<sup>[28]</sup> The "Can't Buy Me Love" segment borrowed stylistically from Richard Lester's earlier *The Running Jumping & Standing Still Film* and it is this segment, in particular using the innovative technique of cutting the images to the beat of the music, which has been cited as a precursor of modern music videos.<sup>[29] [30] [31] [32]</sup> Roger Ebert goes even further, crediting Lester for a more pervasive influence, even constructing "a new grammar": "he influenced many other films. Today when we watch TV and see quick cutting, hand-held cameras, interviews conducted on the run with moving targets, quickly intercut snatches of dialogue, music under documentary action and all the other trademarks of the modern style, we are looking at the children of A *Hard Day's Night*".<sup>[22]</sup>

## Title

The movie's strange title originated from something said by Ringo Starr, who described it this way in an interview with disc jockey Dave Hull in 1964: "We went to do a job, and we'd worked all day and we happened to work all night. I came up still thinking it was day I suppose, and I said, 'It's been a hard day...' and I looked around and saw it was dark so I said, '...night!' So we came to A *Hard Day's Night*."<sup>[33]</sup>

According to Lennon in a 1980 interview with *Playboy* magazine: "I was going home in the car and Dick Lester suggested the title, 'Hard Day's Night' from something Ringo had said. I had used it in *In His Own Write*, but it was an off-the-cuff remark by Ringo. You know, one of those malapropisms. A Ringo-ism, where he said it not to be funny... just said it. So Dick Lester said, 'We are going to use that title.'"<sup>[34]</sup>

In a 1994 interview for *The Beatles Anthology*, however, McCartney disagreed with Lennon's recollections, recalling that it was the Beatles, and not Lester, who had come up with the idea of using Starr's verbal misstep: "The title was Ringo's. We'd almost finished making the film, and this fun bit arrived that we'd not known about before, which was naming the film. So we were sitting around at Twickenham studios having a little brain-storming session... and we said, 'Well, there was something Ringo said the other day.' Ringo would do these little malapropisms, he would say things slightly wrong, like people do, but his were always wonderful, very lyrical... they were sort of magic even though he was just getting it wrong. And he said after a concert, 'Phew, it's been a hard day's night.'"<sup>[35]</sup>

Yet another version of events appeared in 1996; producer Walter Shenson said that Lennon had described to him some of Starr's funnier gaffes, including "a hard day's night", whereupon Shenson immediately decided that that was going to be the title of the film.<sup>[36]</sup>

The film was titled *Tutti Per Uno* (All for One) in Italy, *Quatre Garçons Dans Le Vent* (Four Boys in the Wind) in France,<sup>[37]</sup> *Yeah! Yeah! Tässä tulemmme!* (Yeah! Yeah! Here We Come!) in Finland and *Os Reis do Iê-Iê-Iê* (The Kings of Yeah-yeah-yeah) in Brazil.

## Novelisation

In 1964, Pan Books published a novelisation of the film by author John Burke, described as "based on the original screenplay by Alun Owen". The book was priced at two shillings and sixpence and contained an 8-page section of photographs from the movie.

## Songs

All tracks credited to John Lennon and Paul McCartney, except where noted.

- "A Hard Day's Night"
- "I Should Have Known Better"
- "I Wanna Be Your Man" (sample)
- "Don't Bother Me" (Harrison) (sample)
- "All My Loving" (sample)
- "If I Fell"
- "Can't Buy Me Love"
- "And I Love Her"
- "I'm Happy Just to Dance with You"
- "Tell Me Why"
- "She Loves You"
- In addition to the soundtrack album, an EP (in mono) of songs from the film titled *Extracts From The Film A Hard Day's Night* was released by Parlophone (GEP 8920) on 6 November 1964, having the following tracks:<sup>[10]</sup>
  - Side A
    1. "I Should Have Known Better"
    2. "If I Fell"
  - Side B
    1. "Tell Me Why"
    2. "And I Love Her"

## Song notes

- "I'll Cry Instead" was among several songs considered for the film but ultimately not included either as an on-camera performance or for usage as an audio-only track. Its status as an early contender for inclusion led to the song being included on the US soundtrack album.
- In the 1982 US theatrical reissue of the film by Universal Pictures, the song "I'll Cry Instead" was used as the audio track for a prologue sequence to the film which consisted of stills from the film and publicity photographs. The prologue was assembled without the involvement or knowledge of the film's director Richard Lester, who subsequently expressed his disapproval of the addition. The prologue was not included on the 2000 restoration of the film.
- The song "You Can't Do That" was filmed as part of the film's TV concert sequence, but was not included in the final cut of the film. At a point before a decision had been made to excise the song from the film, footage of that performance had been sent by the filmmakers and Brian Epstein to be aired on the *Ed Sullivan Show* as a tease to promote the forthcoming release of the movie. The clip aired on the Sullivan show on Sunday, 24 May 1964 in conjunction with an interview with The Beatles specially filmed by Sullivan in London. An extract of the footage of the song performance was included in the 1994 documentary *The Making of "A Hard Day's Night"*.

## Release history

- **1964:** *A Hard Day's Night* was released by United Artists;
- **1979:** Rights to the film were transferred to its producer, Walter Shenson;
- **1982:** Shenson granted rights to Universal Pictures for a cinematic reissue. Universal added a prologue consisting of a montage of photographic stills from the film shoot edited to a soundtrack of the song "I'll Cry Instead", a recording once considered for the film and included on the US soundtrack album but eventually not used;
- **1984:** MPI Home Video, under license from Shenson, first released *A Hard Day's Night* on home video in the VHS, Betamax and Laserdisc formats, which all included the prologue.<sup>[38]</sup>
  - The movie was also released by Criterion in both a single-disc CLV and a DualDisc CAV Laserdisc format. The additional features section on the CAV edition include the original theatrical trailer, an interview with Richard Lester, and his *The Running Jumping & Standing Still Film*.<sup>[39]</sup>
- **1993:** Voyager Company produced a CD-ROM for Mac and PC platforms with video in QuickTime 1 format, containing most of Criterion's elements, including the original script.<sup>[40]</sup>
- **1997:** MPI Home Video released the first DVD edition. It contains the 1982 prologue and trailer, newsreels, an interview with Richard Lester, and *The Running Jumping & Standing Still Film*.
- **2000:** Miramax Films reissued the film in theatres in the United States and then as a collector's edition DVD two years later, as well as its final issue in the VHS format. The film had been transferred from the restored 35 mm negative and presented in 1.66:1 Widescreen. The prologue that Universal added in 1982 is absent on the Miramax releases.<sup>[41]</sup>
  - In addition to the original film, the DVD edition contained a bonus disc with over 7 hours of additional material including interviews with cast and crew members and Beatles associates. The DVD was produced by Beatles historian and producer Martin Lewis, a longtime friend of Walter Shenson.<sup>[41]</sup>
- **2009:** The film was released on Blu-ray Disc in Canada; however, the disc is region free and will play in any Blu-ray machine. It contains most of the 2000 DVD bonus features.

## 40th anniversary cast and crew reunion screening

On 6 July 2004, the 40th anniversary of the film's world premiere, a private cast and crew reunion screening was hosted in London by DVD producer Martin Lewis. The screening was attended by McCartney, actors Victor Spinetti, John Junkin, David Janson and many crew members. In media interviews at the event, McCartney disclosed that while he had seen the film many times on video, he had not seen the film on the 'big screen' since its 1964 premiere.<sup>[42]</sup>

## Notes

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## External links

- *A Hard Day's Night* (<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0058182/>) at the Internet Movie Database
  - *A Hard Day's Night* (<http://www.allmovie.com/work/21522>) at Allmovie
  - *A Hard Day's Night* ([http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/beatles\\_a\\_hard\\_days\\_night/](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/beatles_a_hard_days_night/)) at Rotten Tomatoes
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